

# THE FORKED TONGUE

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI HERPETOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## The Editor's Den

By Grady Calhoun

The January *Forked Tongue* features articles by Grady Calhoun on Crocodile Skinks and on attempts at captive reproduction of Prehensile-tailed skinks.

## Calendar of Events

1/8 Monthly Meeting in room 420 Speaker TBD

## Announcements

The January meeting will be held on **January 8<sup>th</sup>**. The meetings will now be held in room 420 of the Natural Science Building. Right down the hall from our usual meeting room. All subsequent meetings will be held as usual on the first Wednesday of the Month in room 420.

## December Highlights

The December holiday meeting was great! Despite the threat of "White Death" we had a very good turnout. Greg Lipps and Jeff Davis presented a program on some trips they had taken to Belize. The trips are taken frequently and apply toward biology credits for College Students. The slides that they presented depicted herpetological habitat that most of us will only be able to dream about. They encountered numerous specimens. Some of those are Boa Constrictors, Helmeted Iguanas, Green Iguanas, numerous geckos and frogs and some crocodylians. They happened upon a cave that may not have had human visitors for centuries. It was a great program that had something for everyone.

## Crocodile Skinks

by Grady Calhoun

Since I haven't received any articles lately, I thought I'd ramble on a bit about one of my more recent acquisitions; the crocodile skink. One of the first things you will learn about these animals is that they have quite a variety of common names placed on them. These include Red-eyed Armored Skinks, Crocodile

skinks, and Red-Eyed Casque-headed skinks. The bottom line is that this is one of the species that is best referred to by its scientific name *Tribolonotus gracilis*. The first thing that you will notice about these lizards is their prehistoric look. The term "armored" certainly fits. Bony chevrons protrude from the back forming four lines which gradually diminish near the tip of the tail. Individual head scales are virtually indistinguishable. The back of the angular head is adorned with multiple small spines which complete the armored effect. The head reminds me of a triceratops without the horns. Another characteristic of this species is the bright orange ring that nearly surrounds the eye. These animals were obtained as wild-caught animals with the hope of captive propagation.

Very little information about these animals is available. I was told that the males have characteristic pads on their hind feet used in mating. Although I am not sure that this is accurate, one of my specimens has small, but very noticeable, gray pads on the underside of the base of the three middle toes of the back legs. These are completely absent on the other. There are no other differences that I could see. These two animals are currently housed in a 40 gallon long aquarium with gravel substrate. One quarter of the tank is formed into a pool of approximately 8 inches in depth. A powerhead pump is used to circulate the water and provide biological filtration. In addition, this ensures high humidity. These animals are frequently observed in the water and seem to prefer hiding under bark that is at the edge of the water. A container of damp vermiculite is provided just in case eggs are laid. Both individuals have been observed in this container. The cage is maintained at room temperature, approximately 72 degrees Fahrenheit, but has a basking light on one end. The animals have never been observed basking. In fact these animals have never been observed in any activity other than hiding. Occasionally you can hear them scurry and plop into the water as you enter the room in the evenings. It appears that they are very nocturnal, therefore a UV light source was not provided. During the course of researching information for this article, I

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did find a reference indicating that metabolic bone disease was suspected in a juvenile. UV light was provided and the condition was supposedly cured. These animals are fed almost exclusively on gut-loaded crickets. The animals have been maintained in this way for approximately 4 months and appear to be doing quite well.

Another characteristic of the animals which is certainly worth mentioning is a type of defensive behavior. When handled, these animals become completely still and in many cases will remain frozen for minutes after being released. After they have figured out that they are free they will run to cover frantically.

Research performed at the Dallas Zoo Department of Herpetology

[http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted\\_sites/ch/ch/2001/2/](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted_sites/ch/ch/2001/2/) indicates that neonatal care may be provided. This is not that common in lizards. In addition, it has been shown that these lizards demonstrate vocalization. It was stated that the vocalization can be induced by holding the lizard and stroking its dorsum. I tried it. It worked. The lizards made a quick high-pitched barking sound. Both lizards made noise when this was tried and the female produced a distinctively different sound however only a couple attempts were made.

### **Attempted Breeding of the Prehensile Tailed**

#### **Skink**

by Grady Calhoun

A while back I wrote an article regarding the courtship and attempted breeding observed in captive prehensile-tailed skinks (PTS) *Corucia zebrata*. I will briefly describe the set-up which seems to be conducive to breeding. One adult pair of prehensile-tailed skinks is housed in a cage that is 6 feet high, 4 feet wide and 2 feet deep. The cage is made of wood and glass and approximately one half of the top is screen. The other half is covered with glass to maintain high humidity. Sturdy branches are provided for climbing and a cardboard carpet tube is provided for cover. The skinks spend the majority of daylight hours in this tube but will occasionally spend the day perched on top of it. A small cool air humidifier is operated continuously in the enclosure. Breeding activity was observed within days of starting the humidifier. They are fed a diet of leafy greens, squash and occasional treats such as cantaloup or watermelon. Some degree of breeding behavior was observed for several months. In some instances the male would hold the female tightly with

his powerful jaws and attempt to copulate. About one month ago, 2 orange-yellow masses were found in the feeding bowl. These were large, bigger than a large chicken egg. This was approximately nine months after the initial breeding was observed. I was truly disappointed because not only did I miss the chance of having a captive-bred PTSs, I missed the chance of producing twins which is somewhat uncommon. Just prior to this, the male was very, very aggressive, lunging from great distances in an attempt to bite. The female remained handleable. Within days after the slugs were laid breeding activity was observed. The animals are definitely nocturnal and are quite active as soon as the lights go out. Hopefully I'll have a better story to report next year.

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### Requirements for Submitting Articles to the Forked

#### Tongue

1. Articles can be submitted via 3.5" floppy disk or hard copy to Editor, GCHS 11470 Gatch Hill Road, Aurora, IN 4700.
2. Articles may be e-mailed to Grady Calhoun at gcalhoun@seidata.com.
3. Black and white photographs can be included with articles. Photo submissions should include your name, phone number, and description of photo on the back. Photos can be returned.
4. All time dependent submissions must be in the editors possession no later than the meeting previous to the desired publication date.

### Classified Advertizing Policy

GCHS Members may run a free classified ad of 7 lines or less at no charge for an unlimited time; however, the ad will be canceled after one month unless the editor is informed to continue it. Please include scientific names for the animals with your ad as well as your phone number and area code.

Ads of up to 7 lines for non-member are \$2 per issue; ad charges for items more than 7 lines long are as follows:

Business card size	\$3 per issue
1/4 page	\$6 per issue
1/2 page	\$10 per issue
Full page	\$20 per issue

**The GCHS is not liable for the quality of the merchandise advertized. The Society also reserves the right to refuse any ad considered inappropriate.**

### Classifieds

**For Sale:** Herp books, 2 by Bartlett & Bartlett: Monitors, Tegus, and Related Lizards; Geckos. Both are Barron's soft cover @\$3.00 ea. plus postage if mailed. One by Sprackland: Savannah & Grassland Monitors, AVS soft cover @\$4.00 plus postage if mailed. All in almost new shape (I bought two copies at different times, pretty smart, huh?) Located in N. Hamilton County. Al Winstel 513-729-2563

**For Sale:** Amazon tree boas (*Corallus hortulanus*) born 10/13. Various garden phases from gray to tan with light to moderate pattern. \$40.00 ea. Will probably have some eating by mid November. Al Winstel 513-563-4513. Local sales or could bring to GCHS mtg.

**For Sale:** Feeder rabbits and rats. Call Rod Surber at (812) 637-0305 or e-mail me at [Indianarockshop@aol.com](mailto:Indianarockshop@aol.com).

**For Sale:** Aquariums-all shapes and sizes (5-90 gallons). Boa Constrictor(s) may be available, prices negotiable. Call Chris at (513) 451-1203.

**Discount:** A 10% discount is offered to all card-carrying members of the GCHS at All Creatures Animal Hospital where I examine and treat many different reptiles.  
Dr. Dan Meakin, All Creatures Animal Hospital, 1894 Ohio Pike, Amelia, OH 45102 513-797-7387

**Discount:** A 10% discount is offered to all card carrying members of the GCHS at Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic, 5989 Meijer Dr., Suite 2, Milford, Ohio 513-576-0131

(Number to left of decimal indicates males; number to right of decimal indicates females; number to right of second decimal indicates number of unknown sex. For example, 3.2.1=3 males, 2 females, and 1 unsexed specimen)

**Currently Held Positions**

President	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206	Vice President	Dean Alessandrini	(513) 347-0099
		(513) 564-6041			
Treasurer	Peggy Fille	(513) 528-4452	Editor	Grady Calhoun	(812) 926-1206
					(513) 564-6041
Sargent-at-Arms	Bruce Fille	(513) 528-4452			
			Education Conservation Committee Co-Chairman		
Advisor	Ray Whitson	(859) 342-8842		Matt Fille	(513) 528-4452
				Chris Bauer	(513) 451-1203
Secretary	vacant				

**About the GCHS**

The Greater Cincinnati Herpetological Society holds monthly meetings which typically consist of a short business section, a refreshment intermission, and a program related to herpetology. Both members and nonmembers are invited to attend. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in reptiles and amphibians. New members may sign up by mail or at the monthly meetings. Members receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue* and free classified advertising. Annual dues should be directed to the secretary at the society's mailing address, according to the rates below:

Student	\$10.00	Corresponding	\$10.00
Individual	\$12.00	Sustaining	\$25.00
Family	\$18.00	Institutional	\$30.00
		Contributing	\$50.00

**Why Be a Member?**

- Receive monthly issues of *The Forked Tongue*
- Meet individuals knowledgeable about herpetoculture
- Have access to captive-bred herps and feeder animals
- Participate in society-sponsored field trips, and outings.
- Receive a 10 percent discount on herp-related items and services when you show a valid membership card at the following establishments:

Delhi Pet Center	(513) 451-4015
Kentucky Reptile Zoo	(606) 663-9160
Harrison Pet Center	(513) 367-1115
All Creatures Animal Hospital	(513) 797-7387
Dr. Dahlhausen's Veterinary Clinic	(513) 576-0131

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